

2009-07 Must a culture lose its innocence to evolve

[Speaker 2] (0:03 - 0:50)

Eckhart, I've heard you make reference to a number of situations which I think convey the same idea. You've talked about certain cultures that go through a stage where this thought process becomes more developed, which I interpret in some ways as being almost a loss of innocence. Is it necessary for a culture or a stage of civilization to go through this process of losing innocence, of getting trapped in the thought and emotional process, in order then to regain the development of awareness to reach a stage of enlightenment?

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (0:59 - 10:51)

That seems to be the process when we look at it. There are still remnants of ancient cultures, very few these days, who have not gone through that process of loss of innocence or loss of connectedness with being, we could call it, the natural connectedness with being. And a few humans may still have it, very simple people, perhaps who live close to the land, never left.

Very simple people sometimes still have it in some cultures, a natural connectedness with the root of life, with being. They feel they are rooted in themselves, there's a stillness there. That is the natural.

What is happening when you lose it, whether it's an individual or whether it's a whole culture, a whole civilization, when you lose it, then you get lost in problem making, get lost in mind, the loss of original innocence, you could say, which of course is replaced by what is called in Christianity, original sin, which simply means the dysfunction that we all inherit that is there in the collective. So the original innocence is replaced by the original sin. Original innocence, however, is much deeper than original sin.

Original innocence is always still there, even when original sin comes in, it only covers up the original innocence. It does not destroy the original innocence. So the original innocence remains, and then a human being, either an individual or a whole nation, culture, tribe, moves through the phase of being identified with mind, ego, thinking, problem making, conflict, burden, suffering, life, inflicting suffering on other humans around you, continuous violence, and so on.

All that is part of the loss of connectedness with being. That's why so many ancient cultures, and the innocent state, we once were in that. Many ancient myths exist in different cultures throughout the world that speak of the golden age, something, a time when everything was beautiful.

We have it in Indian mythology, at the beginning, humans, they say, lived in connectedness. I'm paraphrasing, but they were one with life, one with the divine. They didn't inflict suffering on others.

There was no violence. Many cultures have that myth still. It survived as a myth.

It's also expressed, of course, in the Bible, at the beginning of the Bible, like a paradise, the loss of paradise. And paradise, of course, is not a place, it's a state. So the loss, is it necessary?

Well, it's happening, it has happened and is happening, so it seems to be an evolutionary process. When innocence is regained, connectedness with being is regained, it is not the same as the state, as that state that was lost. And that, perhaps, is why it is necessary to go through the state of being lost.

When it is regained, it is regained at a deeper level. There's a great deepening. Innocence is there, but from natural innocence, you now go to conscious innocence.

You're fully conscious of your state, rather than living in natural. For example, this is reflected in your relationship with nature, as your consciousness changes. First, let's say, in the innocent state, there's a oneness with nature and a respect for nature, as the old civilizations had, as the Native Americans had, a respect for nature.

They recognized nature as alive with spirit force. They recognized that the tree is not just a dead object that I can use for making money, or for my benefit, or to build a house, or whatever. They recognized the tree is alive with something more than what you see, and they respected that life.

Every animal, even if they had to kill an animal, they respected the life that is in the spirit presence in the animal. So everything, they inhabited a universe that was alive with presence. Now, then, we lost that, and more and more, we began to inhabit a universe that we kept.

We deadened ourselves to the aliveness of the universe. We can't see it anymore. So that we ended up looking at the whole of nature as a utilitarian thing to be used, but no longer recognized the essential aliveness that is in everything in nature.

Why couldn't we recognize it anymore, that it is essentially sacred and essentially one with the life that we are, because we had lost that within ourselves. We had cut ourselves off from the root of being. We were completely trapped in mind, and then nature became dead, and we could then exploit it, do anything, because we didn't know that there was a sacred presence there.

We've lost the sacred presence within ourselves. Well, it was covered up. Then we regain it.

Then again, nature is alive, but this time, there is the added dimension of conscious awareness. When you've always lived in oneness with nature, you don't even know that you live in oneness with nature. It's totally natural.

But when you do it with full consciousness, there is an added dimension to it. And so this is what's happening, and this, it seems to be why the process is that we have to move through the stage of being lost and then regaining. Perhaps the truth of that is expressed in the parable of the prodigal son, which predates, actually, it's used in various cultures, it predates even when Jesus used it.

It exists in different forms. The son of a rich father says to the father, Father, give me my inheritance. I want to go out and make a life for myself.

And so the father says, OK, you go out into the world, and the son goes out into the world, squanders his wealth, becomes a destitute and becomes a beggar, and even forgets where he comes from. And then eventually the father sends messengers to the son to remind him who he is. Don't you remember that you are?

And the beggar says, No, me? The son of the king? No.

And gradually the memory comes back to him, and then he comes back to his father's house, and the father now loves him more than before. That's the story. So there's a deepening, what that parable means, there's a deepening after you've been lost.

When you regain that which has been lost, it is regained at a deeper level because you're now fully conscious of it. There's a conscious dimension, the awareness that is there. That's why that seems to be our destiny.

But perhaps there is no... I just know that this is how it is. There may be exceptions.

There may be certain people on the planet or small groups of people who don't go through it. Who knows? We'll have to see.

I can only see the general trend, the general movement seems to be, Yes, we have to go through that. There may well be exceptions to that. There may well be certain people who remain in the state of innocence, and that is wonderful too.

I don't know. So that's the paradise regained. That is the cycle.

And so I know that I had to go through it. You had to go through it, or are still going through it. And so the state of innocence is lost in childhood.

Every child is still born with it. But then very quickly, these days, it is lost. Well, it's never lost.

It's obscured. That's the journey.

